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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Elementary children inspire Texas Wesleyan graduate to establish career
*StoryTime program promotes literacy to increase TAKS scores***

FORT WORTH, May 10 – Texas Wesleyan English major Cheree Chelette will graduate on Saturday, May 15 at 11 a.m. at the Will Rogers Auditorium located at 3401 W. Lancaster Ave.

During Chelette’s final semester at Texas Wesleyan, she participated in an internship with Texas Wesleyan English Professor Stacia Neeley that has changed the course of her career.

Through the internship, Chelette served as curriculum developer for the Texas Wesleyan StoryTime program, a collaborative effort with the Masonic Home of Texas that benefits students in grades one through six who live and go to the school. The elementary students are encouraged to checkout books from the Wesleyan library and spend quality reading time with Wesleyan student volunteers.

According to the statistics on the Masonic Home Independent School District Web site, in 2003, only 79 percent of students made passing grades on the reading portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test, which measures how well students have mastered the knowledge and skills necessary to progress through Texas schools. The state

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average is 86 percent. Programs, such as StoryTime at Texas Wesleyan, help promote literacy, which will, in turn, increase the probability of higher test scores.

Chelette says the program has been more than worthwhile. As a non-traditional student, Chelette began college following a lay-off from the travel industry after the September 11 tragedy. When she began attending classes, Chelette was not 100 percent sure what she wanted to do with her life. After working with the students from the Masonic Home, Chelette has a much clearer view of the future. After graduation, she says she will continue her education and plans to teach intermediate or middle school, possibly in the Masonic ISD.

“Helping children, giving them the opportunity to learn, inspiring them, befriending them ... it means so much, and really it’s helped me more than them. Some of these students are orphans ... just to see where they are coming from is a humbling experience. It’s been very rewarding.”

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